

Members:

Larry J. Straitiff, Chairman
Robert Billingsley
Hon. Lawrence F. Clark, Jr.
Marshall R. Davis
William R. Erickson, Jr.
Lieut. David Howells
R. Scott Schlechter
Hon. William F. Ward
Gregory A. Young



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A meeting of the County Probation and Parole Officers' Firearm Education and Training Commission convened at 9:00 AM on January 8, 2002 at The Holiday Inn in Grantville, PA. The following Commission members and guests were present:

Larry J. Straitiff, Chairman	Gary Scicchitano (PBPP)
Robert Billingsley	Conway Bushey (PBPP)
Marshall Davis	Jeff Imboden (Guest) Lebanon Co.
David Howells	Richard Mertz (guest) Franklin Co.
R. Scott Schlechter	Thomas McCubbin (Guest) Franklin Co.
Hon. William F. Ward	Jon Clark (Guest) Temple University
Gregory A. Young	Holly Spotts, Commission Secretary
Chester A. Kope, Executive Director	

I. Chairman Straitiff called the meeting to order. He suggested that a motion be made to accept the September 18, 2001 Commission meeting minutes.

MOTION: Commissioner Billingsley made a motion to accept the September 18, 2001 Commission meeting minutes. Commissioner Schlechter seconded the motion.

Commissioner Davis questioned page three of the financial report. He requested clarification on the Commission's expenditures, and the Executive Director responded. The information listed on the report is correct.

Chairman Straitiff asked for a vote on the minutes. A vote was taken to accept the November 20, 2001 meeting minutes and was unanimously approved by the Commission.

II. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

Mr. Kope stated that due to an illness in the family, Mr. Dan Klarsch would not be attending the meeting. Mr. Kope also announced that several guests, including Jon Clark from Temple University, were expected to arrive at some point during the meeting.

Mr. Kope discussed the February 20, 2001 letter that he sent to the Chief County Probation and Parole Offices regarding the 2001 annual requalifications, as well as the new forms that were mailed out to all Commissioners prior to the meeting.

Mr. Kope gave the Commissioners copies of all the forms that the Commission uses. He said that he revised all the forms to include the new legal verbiage that was approved by the Commission and to make them more user friendly.

Mr. Kope asked Commissioner Schlechter if he would begin by discussing the letter that was sent by Mr. James Gunderman, the Deputy Chief in the Dauphin County Adult Probation Department. The letter was in reference to deleting the administrative load from all drills and the course of fire. After a lengthy discussion, Commissioner Davis recommended that this request be given to the Curriculum Committee and that they present their recommendations at the next Commission meeting.

Mr. Kope presented the Interagency Agreement and Intergovernmental Agreement prepared by Ms. Linda Laub. However, Ms. Laub was unable to attend the Commission meeting and Mr. Kope did not feel the documents could be appropriately discussed in her absence. The Commission decided to table the discussion until the March 12, 2002 Commission meeting.

At the last Commission meeting, the Executive Director was directed to send certified letters to the three certified firearms instructors who did not attend the mandatory Train the Trainer session that was held March 2001. Mr. Kope stated that he sent the instructors the letters and provided a copy of them for their review. The three officers in receipt of those letters are Mr. Robert McLaughlin (Pike County), Ms. Charlene Williams (Pike County), and Mr. Bruce Morgan (Allegheny County).

Mr. Kope then discussed a February 20, 2001 letter that was sent to all counties that carry firearms regarding time restraints on conducting the annual requalifications. Because several officers did not requalify and did not submit a petition for an extension Mr. Kope sent certified letters to them revoking their Commission certification to carry a firearm. A copy of those certified letters, as well as replies from the county chiefs, was included for the Commissioners to review.

Mr. Jeff Imboden, Chief Adult Probation Officer in Lebanon County, attended the meeting on behalf of Officer Peter Shultz. Chief Imboden explained to the Commission that Officer Shultz had been previously certified to carry a firearm in Columbia County and then transferred to Lebanon County. Chief Imboden stated that he did not know that Officer Shultz needed to be requalified. He stated that Officer Shultz was trained in the NRA's Distinguished Expert Qualification Course, and took part in a Firearms Instructor Course at the Department of Corrections in Elizabethtown. Officer Shultz is certified to be an instructor, but does not have a certification by the Commission at this time.

Commissioner Billingsley asked Chief Imboden if he received the initial letter of requirement sent out in February of 2001. Because Lebanon County was not carrying at that time, Chief Imboden did not receive the letter and therefore was not aware of the policy.

To avoid future confusion, Chairman Straitiff suggested that all future correspondence be mailed to each of the 67 counties, regardless of whether they carry or not.

MOTION: Commissioner Billingsley made a motion to have all future correspondence/policy amendments sent to all county probation departments, regardless of their carrying status. Commissioner Schlechter seconded the motion. A vote was taken and unanimously approved by the Commission.

MOTION: A separate motion was made by Commissioner Ward to grant Officer Shultz the opportunity to shoot the requalification course of fire prior to March 30, 2002. Commissioner Billingsley seconded the motion. A vote was taken and unanimously approved by the Commission.

Chairman Straitiff questioned the status of the Commission's website. Mr. Kope explained that the previous Webmaster is no longer available, and that a new Webmaster has been recently hired. He stated that he put Mr. Klarsch in charge of getting information to the Webmaster. He stated that Mr. Klarsch did give information to Ms. Keldeen Stambaugh several weeks ago for updating the website, but the old information is still on the web site.

Mr. Scicchitano suggested that routine updates and smaller documents be e-mailed to all county chiefs, rather than sending hard copies through the US mail.

MOTION: Commissioner Billingsley motioned for the option of e-mailing updates to county chiefs when feasible. Commissioner Ward seconded the motion. The vote to accept the motion was unanimously approved.

Chairman Straitiff introduced Mr. Richard Mertz, Chief Adult Probation Office in Franklin County. Chief Mertz attended the Commission meeting to represent Officer Brent Smiley regarding his failure to shoot the annual requalification course of fire. Chief Mertz accepted responsibility for Officer Smiley's failure to requalify and requested the Commission allow him the opportunity to requalify Officer Smiley immediately.

Chief Mertz inquired whether his officer would need to take the classroom portion of the training as well, or just the range portion. Chairman Straitiff explained that there is no current policy regarding such a situation, but that his recommendation is to allow the officer to retake the written test, and then to proceed to the firing range to requalify. Commissioner Schlechter expressed his opposition to the idea of granting exceptions, concerned that the lenience will cause too many officers to not requalify on time. A lengthy discussion took place among the Commissioners regarding the requalification policy and the probable consequences of deviating from it.

Commissioner Ward questioned the difference between In-Service Training and Basic Firearms Training. Commissioner Schlechter explained that Basic Training is for the officer just beginning to train with a firearm, whereas the In-Service Training is more of a refresher course for the advanced shooter. Commissioner Ward then pointed out a discrepancy in the Commission's policy, which would technically allow them to grant Chief Mertz's request without the need for Officer Smiley to attend another Basic Firearms Training Academy.

MOTION: Commissioner Ward made a motion to accept Chief Mertz's request allowing Officer Smiley to requalify, provided the officer submit an application to the Executive Director, as well as attend and successfully complete the next In-Service Training Program, and pass the two Basic Firearms Training written examinations and shoot the range qualification course of fire by March 30, 2002. Commissioner Billingsley seconded the motion. After a lengthy discussion among the Commission, Chairman Straitiff informed the members that the policy needs to be modified, making requirements clear and comprehensible. He then proposed an amendment to the motion, removing the requirement for Officer Smiley to attend the In-Service Training again. Commissioner Billingsley seconded the amendment. A vote was taken and unanimously approved.

Mr. Kope presented the Commission with a letter from Mr. John Moshier, the Chief Adult Probation Officer in Potter County, explaining why he did not requalify. Mr. Moshier indicated that he was unable to attend the requalification course due to being subpoenaed for jury duty. Officer Eric Hensel of Potter County also did not requalify, but failed to supply the Commission with documentation as to why. Chairman Straitiff suggested a motion be made which would allow the two Potter County officers the same opportunity as the one being granted to Officer Smiley of Franklin County.

MOTION: Commissioner Ward made a motion to allow Officer Eric Hensel and Chief John Moshier of Potter County to submit their applications to the Executive Director, take and successfully pass the two Basic Firearms Training written examinations and shoot the range qualification course of fire by March 30, 2002. Commissioner Howells seconded the motion. The Commission called for a vote. Four Commissioners voted to approve the motion and Commissioners Davis and Young voted to disapprove the motion. The motion was approved.

Next, Mr. Kope discussed a revocation letter sent to Ms. Adeline Beighley, the Chief Juvenile Probation Officer in Westmoreland County. Chief Beighley decided she no longer wanted to carry. There was no further discussion necessary regarding this letter.

Mr. Kope announced that the winter training for 2001 would not take place due to insufficient range availability. However, he will attempt to find an indoor range to reserve for possible winter training in 2002-2003.

The Somerset range was discussed next. Mr. Kope offered the Commission several pictures of the range, as well as an e-mail sent to Jon Clark regarding the possibility of utilizing the range for future trainings. Mr. Clark's response was attached to the handout distributed by Mr. Kope.

At that time, Mr. Clark handed out a sample information packet that will be sent out to department chiefs of the counties that carry. He went over the information briefly, discussing the possibility of utilizing a range located in Butler County. Temple is currently examining the range, and will request Mr. Kope's inspection if they find it reasonable.

Mr. Clark announced the addition of a new member of his staff. Mr. Frank Colantonio will be the new contact person for registration of sessions located in the Eastern half of the state. Mr. Clark assured the Commission that Mr. Colantonio would be attending their next meeting. Mr. Clark also suggested that the Commission consider the possibility of requiring students to pass the qualification course, or that they change the title of the course to reflect that it's merely an exercise, not a qualification. Commissioner Billingsley agreed. Commissioner Schlechter feels that anyone unable to pass that course of fire should not be permitted to carry a firearm.

Mr. Clark mentioned that the training contract would be completed in June. He requested the Commission consider renewing its contract with Temple, and offered several suggestions as to how to improve future training programs. Mr. Clark also assured the Commission that he would return to the next meeting with several additional ideas as to how future trainings might be more successful.

Chairman Straitiff explained to Mr. Clark that there are several quality issues regarding the training.

At the request of the Commission, Mr. Clark left the room so that the Commission could further discuss the possibility of renewing the contract with Temple.

There was a lengthy discussion in Mr. Clark's absence regarding the different training options available to the Commission and whether or not they wanted to renew the contract with Temple.

Chairman Straitiff asked the Commissioners if they had any specific topics that they would like to see in the next two year In-Service Firearms Training Curriculum. Some of the topics that were suggested included night fire, entries, searches, and concealed carry.

Upon Mr. Clark's return to the meeting, the Chairman informed him that the first year of In-Service Firearms Training conducted by Temple was less than satisfactory. However, the Commission is interested in possibly reestablishing a limited term contract with Temple, as well as solicit any additional suggestions from Mr. Clark on ideas of how to improve the training in the future. Commissioner Straitiff explained to Mr. Clark that the Commission may decide to start fresh with another contractor subsequent to the upcoming two year period.

In response, Mr. Clark expressed his understanding. He assured the Commission his ideas for improvement would be presented to Mr. Kope by March 1, 2002.

Mr. Kope then discussed the Commission meeting in May 2002, which will be held in Pocono Manor, PA. He inquired as to whether the Commission would like to be represented with a booth at the conference. The members agreed to the idea.

Mr. Kope asked for additions to the next newsletter. He also asked for any submissions to the annual report so that it can be prepared and processed in a timely manner.

Mr. Kope discussed the lodging reimbursement request that was submitted to the Comptroller's Office for payment. The Commissioners discussed the financial report, which showed a balance of \$884,926.

Chairman Straitiff questioned the status of Commission information being transferred to Power Point presentations. Mr. Kope responded that the information has been transferred, but the layout and appearance is still being finalized.

III. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Curriculum

Commissioner Schlechter mentioned the topic of individual counties conducting their own Basic Training. This discussion will be held until the next Commission meeting (March 12, 2002), allowing Commissioner Schlechter to discuss the topic with the Curriculum Committee prior to the next Commission Meeting.

IV. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business.

V. NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Kope asked if the Policy Committee would be amending the incorrect portion of the Commission's policy. Chairman Straitiff assured him the current policy would be revised.

VI. LEGAL ISSUES

There were no legal issues.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENT AND QUESTIONS

There were no public comments or questions.

VIII. ADJOURN MEETING